



Executive Office of  
Environmental Affairs



Massachusetts Office of  
Technical Assistance

# Fact Sheet

## Maintaining Up-To-Date Material Safety Data Sheets

Several environmental, health and safety regulations<sup>1</sup> require Massachusetts facilities to maintain copies of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for every chemical used and/or stored on site. This advisory addresses a handful of specific issues concerning MSDS that all facilities should be aware of.

**It is very important to keep all MSDS up to date.** Many industrial chemical manufacturers regularly modify products to meet new environmental, health, or safety requirements, improve performance or take advantage of new formulation technologies. While standards are in place requiring chemical manufacturers to inform their customers of any “significant change to the health hazard information on the MSDS,” you should consider contacting your suppliers at least every two years<sup>2</sup> to confirm that you have the most up to date version of their MSDS. Don’t assume your supplier will notify you of every change to their product(s).

For example: A company using an adhesive that had neglected to update the product’s MSDS since 1991 wasted valuable time and energy struggling to meet airborne concentration limits for formaldehyde. Ultimately, they contacted the adhesive manufacturer, who informed them that formaldehyde had been eliminated from the product several years ago.

Keeping MSDS on file is not only a compliance issue. The information provided on a properly written MSDS can help facilities reduce risk, identify opportunities for pollution prevention, and maximize performance.

**Facilities should note that not all MSDS are written clearly or provide all the information you may need.** If information concerning ingredients, product toxicity, health hazards, fire prevention or other important items is confusing or incomplete, there are several options available:

- Contact the manufacturer and request clarification
- Contact the manufacturer and request a copy of the appropriate “certified product data sheet,” which provides information on product components in greater detail and specificity than required for MSDS
- Search for an alternative MSDS – the most comprehensive database of free MSDS is available on the Internet at <http://siri.uvm.edu/msds/>.

#### Footnotes:

1. In particular, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200](#)) and Massachusetts Right-To-Know Law ([MGL 111F](#)).

2. Or accessing copies of their MSDS on the Internet, if they make this service available

### *OTA Assistance Services*

*The Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) provides one-on-one technical assistance on pollution prevention (P2), toxics use reduction (TUR) and compliance – as well as guidance in the form of workshops, case studies, manuals and other materials. OTA helps toxics users in Massachusetts to identify TUR/P2 opportunities within their operations and initiate planning efforts. Contact OTA at:*

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Phone: (617) 626-1060 or on-line at [www.mass.gov/ota](http://www.mass.gov/ota)